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By Patrick O'Connor

DENISE VAUTRIN:
Mimi Bamberge ou La Jeunesse d'Hortense Schneider
382pp. Paris: Denoël.

JACQUES OFFENBACH:
Notes d'un Musicien en Voyage
252pp. Paris: La Flûte de Pan.

Both these books are published to coincide with the centenary of Offenbach's death. *Mimi Bamberge* is a novel based on the life of Hortense Schneider, the most famous interpreter of Offenbach's operas in his own lifetime. At the start of *Mimi Bamberge* in *Notes d'un Musicien en Voyage*, which is reissued here in its first edition, Offenbach writes of Schneider: "J'ai pour la grande Duchesse de Gerolstein beaucoup d'amitié, et quand je la vois passer il me semble que ce sont mes succès qui se promènent."

Catherine Jeane Hortense Schneider was born in Bordeaux on April 30, 1833. It is easy to change a figure three to an eight so that she was able to drop five years from her age later on. This was hardly necessary in 1855 when she first met Offenbach, although she had already been on the stage for five years. Their first meeting took place at an audition during which she sang an aria from *Le Domino Noir* by Auber. It seems that Offenbach asked whether she intended to continue her studies. When she replied in the affirmative he is supposed to have exclaimed: "Petite misérable, si tu es le malheur de reprendre des leçons de chant je déchire ton engagement, car je t'engage à 200 francs par mois." Stories such as this, and other details of Schneider's life, are sufficiently romantic to ensure that a novelist's imagination need not be strained to prevent them.

After appearing with Offenbach's new company Les Théâtres Français during its first season, she moved to other, more Parisian theatres, notably the Variétés and the Folies Royales. There she enjoyed an enormous success in *Les Mémoires de Mimi Bamberge* by Grangé-Thibaut which gives the novel its title. Her constant companionship of the Duc de Nemours, who was known as Le Prince des Illusions. One of the most extravagant figures in on stage and off, he seems not to have been above gambling with a lady's money as well as with his own. When he died in 1864, he left \$4,000 francs to Hortense Schneider, which, according to the terms of his will, he had, for-

ceded from the stage. To the same year Offenbach wrote *La Belle Hélène* in which Schneider immortalized the triumph of Second Empire plutocracy.

Mimi Vautrin's book ends with this performance, but adds only a postscript detailing the earlier melancholy later events in the life of this "petite vedette musicale". For the next six years she remained the queen of the Paris stage. After her fiftieth birthday, however, she seemed suddenly to regret her ringtones. She sold her house at the corner of the rue Lescaur and the Avenue de l'Opéra, which had a crest above the door bearing the legend "J'ai chanté", and retired to a sort of marginal respectability on the Cimetière de Bionne.

This marriage ended in disaster; her illegitimate son by Duc Ludovic suffered from epilepsy and died young. Like the Empress Eugénie, whose court her performance had so often scandalized, Hortense Schneider survived until 1920. Although she was always considered her ideal heroine, Schneider appeared in only one of Offenbach's last stage works (For the record these were *Le Violoncelle*, *Tramblolac*, *La Rose du Sahara*, *Flour*, *Le Hélicoptère*, *La Grande Duchesse de Gerolstein*, *La Péri*, *Chérie*, and finally *La Diva* which was described by the Marquis de Villeneuve, a famous theatre critic of the time, as "Le Waterloo d'Hortense").

This novel has so many historical facts and characters that it is difficult to unravel fiction from biography. There is a certain amount of racy dialogue which seems rather modern but one is thankful that unlike previous chroniclers of Offenbach's life, the author does not get lost in a listing of names and dates with a listing of names and dates. This book is an amusing addition to the literature of Offenbachiana and, because of the very many Vautrin has taken on dates and contemporary quotations, it is a useful guide to the half-world of backstage Paris 170 years ago.

If Offenbach's little book is more interesting as an account of life in the 1870s than as an insight into his work, it is the only substantial piece of an autobiographical nature that he wrote. When he accepted an invitation to conduct concerts in New York and Philadelphia in 1876, he was, as always, in urgent need of money. He had by this time lost his position as the leading operatic composer of Paris. Attacked by the Republicans who saw in him a symbol of the hated Imperial era,

he had been replaced in the public favour by young composers such as Charles Lecocq.

Offenbach set sail for the New World on board the postal ship *Canada* on April 21, 1876. This voyage seemed hardly less adventurous than the voyage Paulsen took the year before in his opera *Le Prince des Illusions* which had been given in that performance in October 1875. He wrote with appropriate wit about the crossing and about his arrival in New York. He was met by a party of reporters and photographers, and a small boat which also contained a military band playing Schubert's *March Op. 13* and *La Grande Duchesse*. The phubing and toasting of the hour proved too much for the musicians, who retired to "commencer à jouer les autres". He then wrote: "Les autres retournèrent dans leur mer".

London theatres, was a mere Dutch uncle the nevertheless insisted as late as 1861 that the word "merle" should be replaced by "dunin" in the Sadler's Wells production of *La Vie parisienne*. Offenbach's favourite genre, indeed, was forced upon him by a Napoleonic cude, under which a divorce issued by the unbelievably officious Paris bureaucracy authorized him to perform "Pantomimes burlesques" and "Comédie-Plays with words and music for two or three characters... Conjuring, juggling, fantasmagoria, Chinese shadows and marionettes... Dance routines... Physical feats... and Comedettes for one or two performers in or out of costume". Even the name of his theatre was forced on him: *les Bouffes-Parisiens*. As a foreign-born and Jewish immigrant (his father had brought him from the Paris Cimetière to study at the Paris Conservatoire) Offenbach had to tread warily, but nevertheless managed to wage a constant war of satire against authority and almost everyone else, especially Grand Opera, his own obscurity. He even resorted to the cause of adding an extra character to the number allowed by the bureaucrats, by making him into a deaf-mute.

He succeeded in offending many of his contemporaries, including Berlioz and Wagner. Offenbach



Hortense Schneider in *La Grande Duchesse de Gerolstein* from Alexander Faris's book reviewed on this page.

Offenbach's first comedy in England. To his delight it was a success. He was met by a party of reporters and photographers, and a small boat which also contained a military band playing Schubert's *March Op. 13* and *La Grande Duchesse*. The phubing and toasting of the hour proved too much for the musicians, who retired to "commencer à jouer les autres". He then wrote: "Les autres retournèrent dans leur mer".

A Prussian's impressions

By S. S. Prawer

THEODOR FONTANE:
Wanderungen durch England und Schottland
Edited by Hans-Heinrich Reuter
Vol. 1. 653pp. Vol. 2. 645pp.
Berlin: Verlag der Nation

Fontane's writings on England have never been fully collected. Many still slumber, anonymous and unrecognized, in the columns of various journals, or inaccessible filed away in Prussian archives. It has been estimated that if they were ever brought together, they would occupy at least 5,000 printed pages. From the mass of material that is available—some of it published by the author himself, some posthumously by others—the late Hans-Heinrich Reuter compiled the generous selection here offered under a title never approved by the author. The title, *Wanderungen durch England und Schottland*, is a little misleading, because it suggests that the author was once in England and so far only a fraction of these translations has been identified.

Fontane spent almost four years in England. He came first for a mere fortnight, during the hungry 1840s, when he was a young anglophile who sought (and found) confirmation of his literary experiences, and whose diary stylized actual observations and encounters to make them conform to literary models. His later accounts of the same incidents are more sober and probably nearer the truth. He came again in the summer of 1852, as London correspondent of a government newspaper, the *Preussische Zeitung*; and yet again, for a stay lasting over three years (September 1855 to January 1859) as press attaché of the Prussian government and purveyor of facilities for a number of largely right-wing Prussian journals. He tried, and failed, to find a way of settling in England permanently; and though he never revisited these shores after his return to Prussia in 1859, he kept up his interest in what went on here, especially through his correspondence with a London physician, Dr. James Murray.

By arranging his material chronologically, the editor has been able to demonstrate not only fluctuations but also forward development in Fontane's attitude to the British and their island. We can trace a change from almost uncritical approval in the 1840s in admiration of the 1850s, and thence to a gentle, often sceptical mingling of

praise and blame in the 1890s, with praise, on the whole, predominant. Lack of an adequate income, lack of introductions to Englishmen prominent in society and the arts, and overwork imposed on him by his Prussian employers, severely limited the contacts Fontane was able to make, and the aspects of British life he was able to see. When this pressure eased, when he was able to rent a house in Camden Town and live there with his family in at least modest comfort, he was further handicapped by his wife's inability to speak English at anything beyond the most rudimentary level. This again limited severely the circle of acquaintances he could cultivate. He made contact with a few English families, of whom he has left ample accounts—but on the whole his writings about England are superficial, the work of a tourist, newspaper-reader, and theatre-goer. Now and then they are wholly reliable in matters of factual information. English readers will therefore not find a great deal in these reports, despite their variety, and their occasional sharp observation, which they could not glean from, say, Trevelyan's *Social History*. Some of his more dreadful pieces have happily been left out of Reuter's selection: the account of Turner, for instance, which shows his helplessness when confronted with great paintings, and the notorious piece in which Grogg's *Sail and Lichen* is praised at the expense of the English novels with which it is compared, and express approval given to Freytag's colonial attitudes to the Slavs. Whether Fontane himself would have included such essays in the three-volume collection of his writings on Britain which he planned but for which he never found a publisher, is a question that cannot now be answered. He would surely have, however, wished to include any other piece also left out of Reuter's selection: the essay "Whigs and Tories", which contained maxims and suggested attitudes—that were

present; that travel becomes an inner adventure only triggered off by the experience of the senses. This comes out particularly well in Fontane's reports from Scotland. These accounts, which appear just for a moment at the Periphery of vision, to be immediately shut out by associations derived from old chronicles, or border ballads, or Burns, or—particularly—from Sir Walter Scott. The very fact that these were experiences of another country than that in which Fontane had grown up—that they took in another country's history and contemporary reality—rescued him from the provincialism which he deplored in his friend Theodor Storm and which he recognized as a danger in himself. Gullible Benn, who was not a wholehearted admirer, once put his sense of Fontane's Prussianism and breadth of vision into a characteristic epigram: "Er ist vaterländisch, ohne das zu sein."

The last and in many ways the most important reason why we should greet the material selected by Reuter with respectful attention is that it lays bare the roots of Fontane's art, not only as a ballad-poet indelibly influenced by Scottish and English examples, but also as a novelist. The phenomena he observed with such fascination in the London of the 1850s—industrialization, expansion and conspicuous wealth, social mobility made possible by the profits of commerce, imperialist obliviousness—he encountered afterwards in Berlin; and the ability to understand and describe a nineteenth-century metropolis, a *Weltstadt*, which he first showed in his reports from London, stood him in good stead many years later when he came to write those novels about Wilhelmshagen and Berlin whose reputation stands so deservedly high today. Reading the material selected by Reuter, the lover of Fontane's novels will again and again experience a shock of recognition: he will recognize the germs, the first trial versions, of scenes and conversations in such later works as *Unsterbliche* or *Der Stechlin*. He will also come to appreciate how much Fontane's depiction of Prussian society owes in one way or another, but in which these pages pay a well-deserved tribute to Thackeray, and his *Penny* Fair.

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to the editor

Writers and their Audience

Sir, James Campbell writes (Commentary, September 5) "There was a rumour going round for the writers' Conference, Edinburgh Festival that Vidal had greeted Anthony Burgess with the remark: 'Hi, still writing for an imaginary audience?' This is the sort of invention that will be repeated until, with time, it will be true. I sold no such thing. How could I? I'm a part of Burgess's audience and although I am often grotesquely imagined, I am not imaginary.

GORE VIDAL,
La Rondinaia, Ravello (Salerno), Italy.

Dante

Sir, Dante and Guido Cavalcanti are unfortunately not alive to receive Roger Scruton's interpretations of their works (September 26). He also claims, however, to know that I am "under the impression that Aristotle did not believe in God". I am not. Nor did I say anything in my book about Dante to justify such a statement.

GEORGE HOLMES,
St Catherine's College, Oxford, OX1 3JL.

August Courtauld

Sir, Craig Brown complains (September 26) that in *The Man on the Ice* I do "at excessive length with [August] Courtauld's uneventful career in the army and as a county councillor".

NICHOLAS WOLLASTON,
Thornton Hall, Stoke by Nayland, Colchester.

Translating 'Eugene Onegin'

Sir, I am prompted by Kyell Plez's generally favourable review of the Penguin paperback edition of Charles Johnston's translation of Eugene Onegin (September 19) to raise a dissenting voice in the matter of its quality and fidelity to the original.

At the time of its first appearance, three years ago, as Mr Plez remarks, Sir Charles's version was greeted—mainly by reviewers who had little or no Russian—as a triumph of the translator's craft: simply the best translation of the poem ever. And it well may be.

In the background of any discussion about translating Eugene Onegin must loom Nabokov's prose, of course, and his scathing attacks on previous attempts in rhyme. As a non-academic reader of Russian, who took the trouble to examine Sir Charles's work, I can only say that it is scarcely free of the contrivances, additions and omissions of the poet's translator than its predecessor (amusing them all). I have before me many as I tried to make at the time, of which there is only space to recall two here.

The first four lines of the third stanza of Chapter 2, for instance, are a mistranslation. The use of the present participle, and around the necessary feminine rhymes, rather like listening to an Indian speak in the colloquial present tense, do drozhklos "jaunt at full power" or "bookshelves usually contain" or "dusty speak". Since I do not have the paperback edition to hand, I do not know if any of these points has been subject to the slight revision your reviewer mentions.

Sir Charles's is, of course, a very creditable attempt at turning Pushkin into English—a superhuman task. But if, as you say, "Pushkin's Russian and its Russian critics' words" might be "lost" in this, why, why, why?

translating for him would have been a middle-aged, more studious Byron, who had at his command such easy Russian as he had Italian in his youth.

M. G. MOOREY,
1781 Central Road, Worcester Park, Surrey.

Wang Wei

Sir—Reading the extract from H. A. Giles's translation of a poem by Wang Wei quoted by Charles Tansman in his introduction to *The Oxford Book of Chinese Verse in English Translation* (September 26), I couldn't help reflecting on the utterly different effect the same poem makes in the last movement of "Absence" of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*. Mahler himself adapted the German text of Wang Wei, whose book of poems, *Die chinesische Flöte*, he had been given by a friend. He did not know Chinese, and worked from French, German and English versions—unsuccessfully imitating Giles's, I suppose.

C. J. BOSANQUET,
22 Somerhill Court, College Road, London SE21 7LZ.

National Union Catalog

Sir—If Eric Kora (September 26) has accepted that Volume 681 (the reference in Volume 629 is a misprint for 179) of the *National Union Catalog, Pre-1956 Imprints* does not start with "duplicate" imprints from the YMCA of New Mexico, he has lost. But he should pause—if it is not too late—before paying out, as he may be a victim of once being. Volume 680 was published in April, the first entry being "Young Men's Christian Association, New London. Constitution and by-laws". This fact has been accessible for some months to users of the library less diletto in getting the volumes on its shelves than that frequented by Mr Kora seems to be.

He has been similarly misled by the absence of the *HMIC* volumes (53-56, four volumes, since Mr Kora, not five). These were issued in May and far from having been fifteen years of continuous and highly expert editing and refinement, such is their importance that the little entries in the Catalog are being made available in five self-contained volumes entitled *The Bible, Texts and Translations of the Bible and the Apocrypha and Their Bibles from 1956 Imprints*. More good news for Mr Kora.

St Hugh's College, Oxford.

Nonesuch Press

Sir, Montague Summers have suspected "Francis" to be and [David] Garnett of being most unlikely that he thought of them "connected with Nonesuch Press" (198, A. C. 121). The fact that Francis (properly identified as the poet of the Nonesuch Press) and the Birrell (co-founder with the Birrell) of Nonesuch Press, shared the same first name is perhaps, contributing to the confusion about Birrell's "romanticism" also, the fact that the two names shared the same premises for a time. Birrell and Garnett shared the same first name for a time. Birrell and Garnett shared the same first name for a time. Birrell and Garnett shared the same first name for a time.

JOHN CHAMBERLAIN,
Munwell Publishing, J. Munwellbury Place, London WC1.

Mary Shelley and Her Letters

Sir, Donald Reiman (Letters, October 3) is understandably disappointed that I did not think the Mary Shelley letters in the *Pfizer* collection particularly interesting. I found the letters in the *Pfizer* collection particularly interesting. I found the letters in the *Pfizer* collection particularly interesting. I found the letters in the *Pfizer* collection particularly interesting.

He quotes me out of context. I did not write that Mary Shelley wrote an account of the death of her husband or children; but that, unlike Trelawny, "she did not think to shut down and pen a well-turned account of these things." I found the letter he refers to in the *Pfizer* collection particularly interesting. I found the letter he refers to in the *Pfizer* collection particularly interesting. I found the letter he refers to in the *Pfizer* collection particularly interesting.

Mary Shelley started *Frankenstein* before she was nineteen. I acknowledge and would that she did not finish it until after her birthday. This is my only error of fact which Mr Reiman chooses to mention.

It would be impertinent to suggest that Mr Reiman had missed the point of what I wrote. I am not ashamed to be what Mr Reiman calls a "generalist" and he is quite right to say that "Wilson evidently professes pictures to 600 pages of deeply printed text with full scientific annotation". There are such things, nowadays, as microfilms.

A. N. WILSON,
St Hugh's College, Oxford.

Across and Down

Sir—If 47 across in Eric Kora's crossword (Reminders, September 26) from the *North Frontiers News* was 18, then I don't see how 47 down could have been 18. 47 across began with 1, they so would 47 down; but if 47 down began with 1, then 47 across would not, surely.

HAY WARD,
21 Crescent Lane, London SW4 9PT.

Among this week's contributors

ROBERT KATZ is the author of *The Working Classes in Fiction, 1971*, and editor of *Into Unknown Britain*, 1977.
PHILIP LARKIN's most recent collection of poems is *High Windows*, 1974.
VIRGINIA LAWRENCE SMITH's *Alison Cleghorn and the Lady with the Dog* was published in 1973.
PATRICK MCCARTHY is the author of *Colony*, 1975.
GEOFFREY MARSHALL's books include *Constitutional Theory*, 1971.
TIM MAYON teaches Modern History at St Peter's College, Oxford, and is the editor of *History Workshop Journal*.
BRUCE MORRISON's book *The Piano* will be published next year by Phaidon.
RAY OCKENROTH is a Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford.
PATRICK O'CONNOR is the editor and publisher of *Tribute to Yeats*, 1975.
S. S. PRABHU's books include *Comparative Literary Studies: An Introduction*, 1973, and *Karl Marx and World Literature*, 1976.
PAUL PRESTON is a lecturer in Modern History at Queen Mary College, London.
T. J. REED's most recent book is *The Classical Centre: Goethe and Weimar 1735-1832*, 1979.
NARRA RICHARDS' books include *The Face of Egypt*, 1976.

Socialist superblocks

By Andrew Saint

MANFREDO TAFURI and others:

Vienna 1930: La politica residenziale nella Vienna socialista, 1919-33. 232pp. Milano: Electa.

Public or state-aided housing was a nineteenth-century reformer's concept which gained international acceptability only between the wars. Of several European cities that plunged ardently into public-housing programmes in the 1920s, Vienna was much the most conspicuous, though by no means the most prolific. In Berlin some 140,000 dwellings were erected with public funds (mainly through building societies) between 1926 and 1932; in Greater London, admittedly a larger city, 78,534 units were directly built by local authorities between 1920 and 1929. By contrast, "Red Vienna" achieved only 63,000 dwellings between 1922 and 1934, when Fascism smashed the programme of the Social Democrats.

Yet Vienna's fame in this regard is merited, and entirely worthy of this book, and its accompanying exhibition (held in Rome earlier this year). For Vienna was the first city to promote municipal housing as both a political product and a political instrument. The socialists who governed the city during these years found themselves in a strange predicament. Austria after Versailles was drastically diminished in size, its economy half-supported and half-inhibited by other powers. Vienna itself was surrounded by a conservative countryside where revolution had little hope of success. The "Austro-Marxist" ideologies of the Social Democratic Workers' Party therefore opted for reform.

A radical housing programme, funded largely out of a tax on private rents and with stringent tenants' protection, became the foremost strand of this policy. The housing legacy of the imperial era was especially grim; the previous twenty years had merely seen the proliferation of *Mietkasernen*, the multi-storey, speculative tenements where most Viennese workers dwelt. The downfall of the Habsburgs and their entrance into the city council in 1919, while the influx of the postwar period rendered their control imperious. Finally, the socialists were obliged to strengthen their power base by improving their supporters' lot and nurturing their loyalty. (In some sense they differed from post-war British governments, who in housing for political ends wished to appease working-class discontent.)

Just the same circumstances determined what has always been struck architectural observers about

the Vienna city houses—their blatant urban character. Nearly all the estates illustrated in this book were, for their time, broad and tall. Some were of very great size as well; Ernst's celebrated Karl Marx-Hof of 1927-30, for instance, contained 1,382 flats. To an extent it is right to interpret the confidence these superblocks had in the urban called *neuevienna* as a manifestation of political will and pride. Manfred Tafari, the well-known architectural historian who contributes much space to linking (in the literal yet all-too-lame idiom that passes in some circles for Marxist analysis) to contemporary political ideology. Certainly the city council built at high density and provided communal facilities on an unparalleled scale (laundries, drying rooms, crèches, playgrounds and in some cases even reading rooms and libraries) in order to foster socialist values and cement loyalties. They succeeded, too; the short-lived anti-Fascist rebellion of February 1934 was partly conducted from these "red strongholds".

Nevertheless, in many eyes — socialist ones included — the Viennese built superblocks *faute de mieux*, because they were cheap. In celebrating the blocks as symbols of Vienna's political resolve Tafari goes over this too lightly. The 1920s saw never known to that housing that is still with us; whether housing should be dispersed and suburban, or denser and more urban—generally the cheaper but less healthy alternative. At the time this was known as the issue of the *Siedlung* versus the *Hof*, and on the whole German-speaking reformers and architects favoured the former. German cities, when construction finally revived in the 1920s, usually built *Siedlungen*. Vienna, starting earlier, was pushed into *Höfe* above all by economy and the availability of central sites; only a few *Siedlungen* were built.

Many people deplored this necessity, as some helpful contemporary articles republished at the back of Vienna *Reisen* show. Josef Frank, one of the most able architects who contributed to the housing campaign, wrote that his work on the *Höfe* was an act against his own conscience. The dramatist Ernst Toller, while feeling in 1927 that the Viennese achievement was "dispersed with extraordinary precision", was at the same time depressed that every German radical socialist heard within him "admitted: 'with all respect for what has been done, I think it can be affirmed that the urban organism of the *Siedlung* produces results superior to those achieved at Vienna'". The planning of the superblocks confirms the point. Despite the public facilities, the flats were by the best standards of the time small and cramped, because economy was paramount.

As an analysis of the Viennese programme this book in no way supersedes the masterly account in Charles A. Gulick's *Austria from Hapsburg to Hitler*, published as

long ago as 1948. But it exemplifies Gulick by illustrating a large number of the blocks (though alas only anti-fascist modern photographs are used, and no interior views shown). The task of assessing architectural quality is hard, as the blocks are mixed in style and authorship. Some were designed by municipal employees, some went to prestigious private architects (Peter Behrens, Adolf Loos and Josef Hoffmann all contributed), more were allotted by public competition. The styles typify the tentative early modernism of the 1920s, before Bauhaus orthodoxies prevailed. Windows tend to be plain, walls succeed, but most are frequently pitched and expressionist details or hangovers from the Wagnerian enliven the facades here and there. Ernst's Karl Marx-Hof, by general consent, is the high point, yet some of the more conservative schemes, like those by the partners Heimlich Schmid and Hermann Aichinger, are also attractive. Tafari predictably likes the more progressive-looking designs, but here Toller, as a layman, again has a good point. "I was greatly interested to notice that in general the workers liked modernism and enjoyed an understanding of the new, simple modern architecture. Why? The modern architect reaches simplicity out of a superabundance of luxurious vanities. He has overdone luxury and takes for his new form only the essence. The worker, by contrast, has never known that luxury; greyness and monotony have always dwelt within his old home. Luxury for him was a dream, an unreachable desire." This was exactly what Modern Movement architects found in Russia a few years later.

A note may be worth adding on an unexplored relationship—that between public housing in Vienna and London. On this Tafari and his colleagues are silent, believing British housing theory to be limited to the *Siedlung*. Yet the London County Council pioneered public block-dwellings in the 1890s, and in 1931 the architect C. Grey Wornum had this to say. "A short while ago a member of the LCC Housing Committee complained to the architect's department that Vienna had gone so far ahead of us. The member showed a plan and a photograph of a Viennese block. The architect identified the plan as being one sent by the LCC to Vienna thirty years ago." Further to which, in 1927, the same impression of living in the peculiar, highly wrought world of our author's imagination rather than in any recognizable form of human life. This necessary assumption required of the reader is some new separation of West German States, including by the Palatine as far as the Rhine, with Trieste as a capital, into a group ruled by a Dictator, Herr Demissensor. He is before all things a Puritan, ruling Trieste's morals with a discipline that began from its inhabitants' unaltered gratitude nor respect. Oliver Chant, a rich young Englishman, comes to this State as an agent of revolution with instructions from a departed subject who has already been implicated in a plot against Demissensor. The

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers as they reach this office, not later than Friday, October 31. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers to be opened, or failing that, the most nearly correct—in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries should be addressed in the Editor, The Times Literary Supplement, P.O. Box 7, New Printing House Square, Gray's Inn Road, London WC1N 8E2, and marked "Author, Author" on the envelope. The solution and result will appear in our issue of November 7.

Competition No. 40
1 Have you heard the groan of a gravelled grouse?
Or the snarl of a snuffed snail (Husband or mother, like me, or spouse),
Have you lain a-creeper in the darkened house
Where the wounded wadobats wait?
2 Cesce, War, thy babbling madness that the wine shores,
And bld thy legions turn their swords to mine shores.
3 A Mouse that prayed for Allah's Blaspheemed when no such aid befell:
A rat, who feasted on that mouse, Thought Allah msnaged vastly well.

Competition No. 36
Winner: Flora Alexander, 45a Queen's Road, Aberdeen AB1 6YN
Answers:
1 Coleridge received the Person from Porlock
And ever after called him a curse,
Then why did he hurry to let him in?
He could have hid in the house,
—Stevie Smith, "Thoughts about the Person from Porlock"
2 Shelley dreamed it. Now the dream decays.
Tha props crumble. The familiar ways
Are stala with tears trodden
The heart's flower withers at the root.
The slow years shall tame your ivory lust.
—R. S. Thomas, "Song of the Year's Turning"
3 When Byron's eyes were shut in death,
We bowed our head and held
He taught us little, but our soul Had felt him like the thunder's roll
—Matthew Arnold, "Memorial Verses"

Fifty years on...

Graham Greene's *The Name of Action* was reviewed in the TLS of October 9, 1930 (on a page which also carried notices of the latest *Grassroots*—On Forsyte, "Change—And of Arnold Bennett's Imperial Pelore").

Mr Graham Greene seems to demand a special setting for his highly strung novel. "The Man Within" took us into a historical past that differed in its effects from the omniscient, romanticized "period" of the historical novelist. And now that in *The Name of Action* (Holt, 7s. 6d. net) we are transported into the past future, we are left with precisely the same impression of living in the peculiar, highly wrought world of our author's imagination rather than in any recognizable form of human life. This necessary assumption required of the reader is some new separation of West German States, including by the Palatine as far as the Rhine, with Trieste as a capital, into a group ruled by a Dictator, Herr Demissensor. He is before all things a Puritan, ruling Trieste's morals with a discipline that began from its inhabitants' unaltered gratitude nor respect. Oliver Chant, a rich young Englishman, comes to this State as an agent of revolution with instructions from a departed subject who has already been implicated in a plot against Demissensor. The

chief revolutionary on the spot is a Jewish poet named Kapper, who is eager to avail himself of Chant's offer of money to help the cause, but prefers the method of the printing-press to that of the machine-gun. Chant, however, something of a purist in this connexion, is all for firearms: a choice that is further influenced by his feeling for the wife of the Dictator, Anna-Cher, with whose photograph he has fallen in love in England, and with whom the necessary cast of ridicule brings him into personal relations on his first night in Trieste.

This is a basis for a rapid story of action, may sound unorthodox enough; but, whatever Mr Greene's failings, they do not include unorthodoxy. As in "The Man Within" the story takes place within the consciousness of a single individual, in this case Oliver Chant, and all our sight of reality is influenced by his outlook. The world we see is not, perhaps, a familiar one; but it is credible. And the climax, implicit in the poet Kapper's natural genius for killing by remote control, is then by force of events, is effective and satisfying. Also, the book within the limits that Mr Greene has rightly imposed upon himself is admirably written. There is no decline throughout from the tensely and vividly of the opening description of Oliver Chant's arrival at Trieste.

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By Alan Hill

gouging one of its shins; a commemorative statue (the national and international figure in question is not identified by Becker). When a vandal who looks to him suspiciously like his grandson comes along, and gives it a coat of paint under his very nose, he looks to act, and suffers humiliation from

act, and suffers no ill-effects from his superiorities. He is typical of Becker's adults; a study in self-servicence that is little short of enforced self-interest. In "Aus dem Leben eines Thunfisch," the last story in "Ausschnitt aus einem Roman," he describes a man's loathing of the sea as being due to his stock his room, his revulsion at the accumulation of a lifetime.

Despite this movement, Nach der Freiheit Zerkunft is not a pessimistic work. Far from it. The child and the adult have two different perceptions, but the former is never more than half conscious. While the first half of the book portrays courage and imagination, the second exposes hypocrisy and timidity, and shows the need to

of courage and imagination directly to the second exposes hypocrisy and timidly, end shows the need to support them. Becker's is not a didactic book, but it has a significant purpose which is conveyed both in the individual stories and in the structure of the sequence as a whole. Becker succeeds where a Marxist critic accuses Kafka of failing: in the duty of literature to give people courage—"Mensch zu machen".

Formally and stylistically, there is enormous variety in *Nach der ersten Zirkulation*—an indication that the characters are not

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Perhaps Gabriele Wohmann's euphonious name has counted against her over here. It evokes the image of a lady novelist, whereas her new work shows one more that she is, in fact, a tough-minded woman writer.

Rebels and servants

This kind of person is made subject of the later stories, where he is peopled by innocent capitalists, men divided against themselves, made to look ridiculous in events, and victimized by his nuthrman as well. The old nuthrman in "Der Fluch der Vöndschuft" is a typical specimen of an eager, though superstitious servant of the state. He gets a

Formally and stylistically there is enormous variety in *Nach dem ersten Zirkeln*—an indication of the healthy state of German fiction brought home by the author's snarl to "Die Mauer," a fully-pegged tree of Jesse in a Nazi concentration camp, lightning and machinery seen through the eyes of its victim, a five-year-old hero; and some oblique pieces of *Kurzspross* to augment the biographical accounts of a trip to the United States. Throughout Becker's imagination is effortlessly self-consistent, extracting the richest detail from mundane surroundings and from even the fancifullest of them, never becoming merely speculative.

The cold road south

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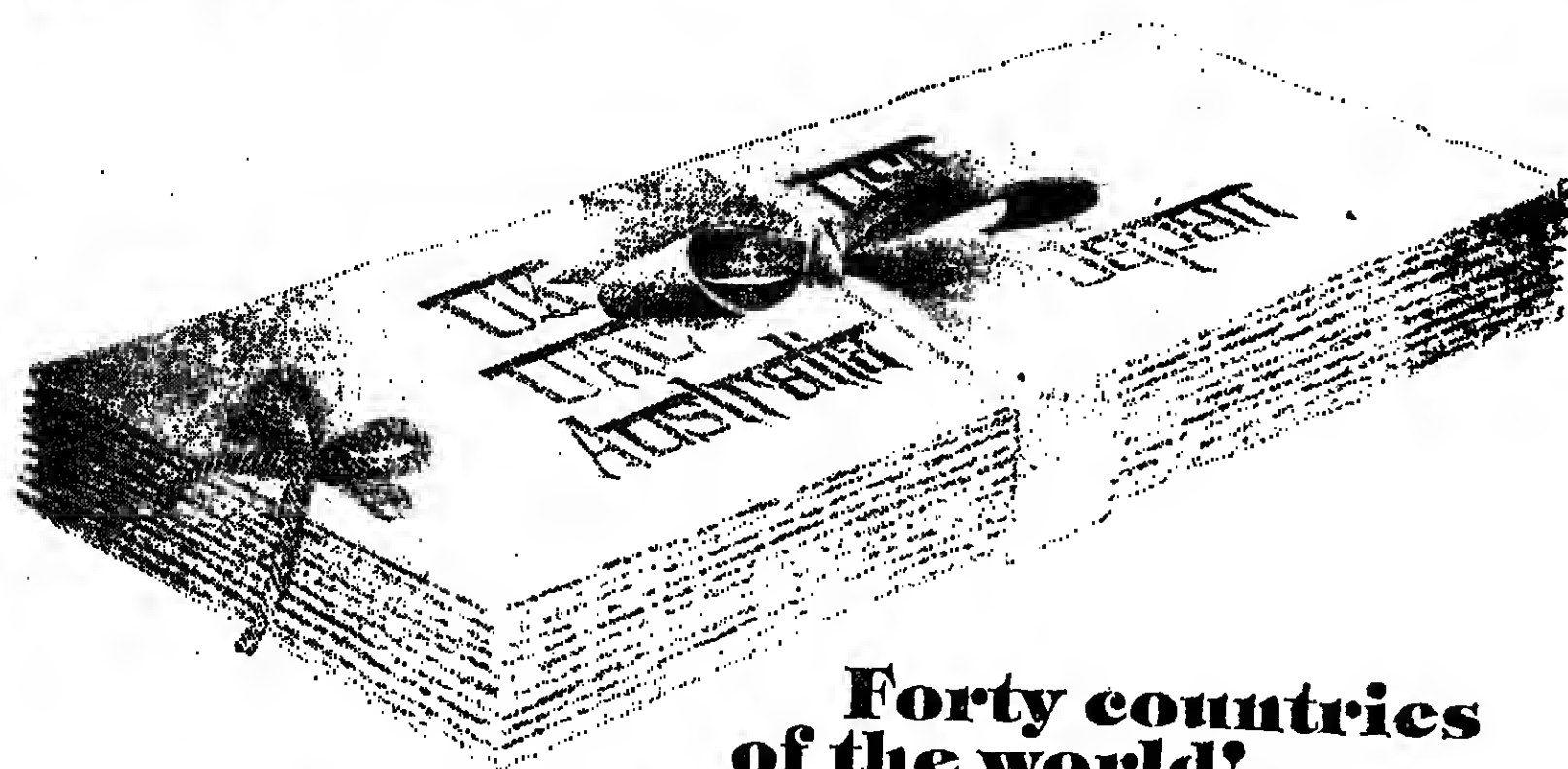
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Affluence and alienation

By Edward Timms

ALAN BEST and HANS WOLFSCHÜTZ
(Editors):
Modern Austrian Writing
Literature and Society after 1945
307pp. Oswald Wolff. £9.50.
0 85496 067 8

The attempt to identify a specifically Austrian strain in German literature has a long history. The notion of Austrian modernism, a notion pioneered by Hermann Bahr in the 1890s, found its most eloquent exponent in Hofmannsthal. This literary tradition was comprehensively surveyed in the four volumes of the *Deutsch-Österreichische Literaturgeschichte*, published between 1899 and 1937. Since then there have been many variations on this theme—from Josef Nadler's attempt to relate literary tradition to landscape, folklore and racial inheritance, through to Claudio Magris's more critical account of the "Habsburg Myth", and culminating in W. M. Johnston's ambitious study, *The Austrian Mind*.

However problematic the methodologies employed in some of these studies, they have focused attention on an independent and relatively cohesive Austrian cultural tradition which survived the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy or at least until the Anschluss of 1938. They also show that this sense of tradition has had important political implications. The Habsburg Myth was not merely an exercise in nostalgia. It was the more conservative groups in the First Republic who offered most resistance to Hitler's plans to wipe the name of Austria off the map.

The Austrian Republic re-established after the war has just celebrated thirty-five years of independent existence. The question raised by *Modern Austrian Writing: Literature and Society after 1945* is whether this flourishing political and economic unit has generated a corresponding literary revival. How close is the relationship between literature and society postulated in its subtitle? How strong is the sense of continuity with Austrian literary tradition? In what sense is the work of Austrian writers since 1945 "modern" (rather than merely "recent")? These questions are not explicitly formulated—the book lacks a theoretical introduction. It takes the form of a series of chapters by different hands on writers of Austrian origin who have come into prominence since 1945. But all the contributors justify in differing ways the revival of specifically Austrian modes of literary discourse.

"The Austrian Tradition: Continuity and Change" is the title under which Alan Best introduces the first group of "transitional" authors, whose early work dates back to the First Republic. Where, as in Germany the year 1945 was experienced as a complete break with the past, in Austria the (argued) there was a strange sense of continuity. Austria could be seen as a victim of National Socialist aggression, rather than an accomplice. Austrians were thus not confronted with the problem of "collective guilt" which has preoccupied German authors. They felt free to explore more traditional modes of experience. The claims of politics are not ignored but rather "displaced" on to an existential or ethical plane, in a manner reminiscent of Hofmannsthal and Grillparzer.

In this process Doderer is seen as the key figure. His novels subordinate the political events of the 1920s and 1930s to an individualistic moral scheme based on the attainment of full humanity ("Menschwerdung"). This emphasis on the individual psyche is identified in a chapter by Alno Best and Peter Pabisch, as "typically Austrian and wholly admirable". George Salko's novels (notably *Die Schindler*) are seen as a comparable though rather more critical attempt to affirm the "compulsive power of the inner life". A similar continuity is also identified in the work of writers whom the Anschluss sent into exile. Fritz Hochwälder, whose plays upholding individual conscience against collective evils of

order are discussed by Alan Best; and Elias Canetti, whose non-political approach to individual and collective megalomania is acutely analysed by David Turner. Among these "transitional" writers only Horvath stands out as a writer prepared to tackle political and social discourse in its own terms.

In a second section Alan Best introduces a group of writers for whom language itself has become a "predominant preoccupation". A concentration on the expressive limits of language is seen as the paradoxical source of "Austrian preeminence" in the literary world of the 1960s and 1970s (Hans Wolfshütz, introducing the "sceptical narrator" Ilse Aichinger). Two chapters by Rex Laus suggest that this preoccupation with the "limits of language" constitutes the strength both of the "sparse and almost inscrutable verses" of Paul Celan and of the politically committed Erich Fried. The "meta-physical poets" Christine Busta, Jorgberg Bachmann and Christina Lavaut are placed in this same tradition, which is traced back to the linguistic theories of Hofmannsthal, Kraus and Wittgenstein. A final section introduces the literature of "Crisis and Revolt" which has emerged since the mid-1960s in protest against the restorative tendencies in Austrian culture: the "Wiener Gruppe" and Ernst Jandl, whose Dadaist experiments are introduced by Michael Butler; and the "Grazer Gruppe" (including Peter Handke and Wolfgang Bauer) whose assaults on the "prisonhouse of language" are discussed by Hugh Morrison.

This is certainly a useful book. It offers succinct introductions to a range of authors who deserve to be better known in the English-speaking world. The trouble is that it begs the more fundamental questions which it purports to answer. The notion of a continuing Austrian literary tradition is questionable on various counts. To qualify as Austrian in this sense, an author must clearly produce something more substantial than a pastiche.

The connections between literature and society are clearly more tenuous than the editors of *Modern Austrian Writing* allow. In the one section which deals with this problem analytically, Hans Wolfshütz acknowledges that the Austrian literary revolt of the late 1960s was hampered by the politicization of public life in Germany, not by any shift in social attitudes in Austria itself. It was a rejection of what had counted as "Austrian" among writers of the previous generation. That so many writers have voted with their feet reflects a fundamental dilemma. The economic and political success of the Second Republic has generated a cultural conservatism which obliges avant-garde authors to look abroad for a more receptive audience.

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Austrian author while writing primarily for a West German public? The problem is compounded by the decline of Vienna as an intellectual centre. During the past three decades Vienna has remained its affluence without losing its charm. But it has not re-established itself as one of the intellectual capitals of Europe. The lack of a daily newspaper worth reading, the dearth of political or cultural magazines, the paucity of Vienna-based publishing, the weakness of the film industry, oblige Austrian authors to look elsewhere. It is significant that the leading literary magazine is published in Solzburg and the most important forum for experimental literature in Graz. This decentralization has had certain advantages—above all a revival of regional and dialect literature. But it has tended to leave more radical authors either stranded in the Austrian hinterland (Bernhard Genet, a self-sufficient language of melancholy in the isolation of a remote farmstead) or opting for exile (Handke in Paris).

Geography is a crude criterion. An Irish novel may be conceived in Trieste, written in Zurich, published in Paris. What really matters is the socio-linguistic texture of the writing. But even on this count the case for specifically Austrian modes of imaginative writing is unconvincing. The displacement of politics on to an existential or ethical plane forms part of a German (rather than Austrian) cultural tradition. The preoccupation with the internal resonances of language is an even more widely established characteristic of literary modernism. And "linguistic self-consciousness" is a force as a unifying factor when it is stretched to include the Judaistic meditations of Celan, the political precision of Fried and the Dadaistic playfulness of the "Vienna Group". The more fundamental linguistic problem for an Austrian author lies in the choice between high German and dialect. In both spheres Austrian authors have excelled (Handke's lucidity, Bauer's vernacular realism). But few recent authors have exploited the tension between them as effectively as the choice between high German and dialect. The choice between regionalism and exile thus assumes its full significance on the linguistic plane. The most successful Austrian authors are in this particular sense the least Austrian.

In catastrophic times

By Henry Gifford

MIKLOS RADNOTI:
The Complete Poetry
Edited and translated by Emory George
400pp. Ann Arbor: Ardis/Oxford:
Holtan Books. £10 (paperback),
£4.50.
0 88233 514 6.

Radnoti was born in 1909, at a moment when poetry and the arts in general throughout Europe and America had reached a turning-point. On what developed in the next few years the western imagination has been living ever since. Hungarian poetry, as those excluded from its native language can now frustratingly see, holds a distinguished place in that wider European culture, large tracts of which have too long been ignored in the west.

Radnoti is quintessentially a poet of the 1930s and the Second World War, which he did not survive. Late in 1944, a conscripted civilian labourer for the German army, he was sent by impatient guards on a forced march home from Serbia. His most impressive poetry had been reserved for the last few years, his epilogue being ten flower-like pieces copied into a little square-ruled exercise book that was found on his body. These in their capacity to bear pain and not yield to hysteria are worthy of comparison with Anna Akhmatova's Requiem and Mandelstam's Voronezh Notebook.

He is attractive to the western reader for the same reasons that they are. Radnoti, no less devoted to Russia, gains like them a classical strength from his delight in the European heritage. He translates prodigiously, from Greek and Latin, and from French, English and German. Apollinaire, Virgil and La Fontaine were especially congenial to him. It is a pity that his confident stability of rural life when his world was beset with war that directed Radnoti to using a series of elegiacs for his final statement about poetry in a time of catastrophe. The work of his contemporaries here responded to the attack on China in the flooding of Fascism, the Spanish Civil War and the execution of Lorca. What made Radnoti much more than a "thirties poet" as we understand the term was the combined sense of his own predicament (in Hungary, very near the furnace mouth) and of those traditional values, that timeless perspective, which are inseparable from his classicism. The Eighth and final Elegiac allies the poet with the Hebrew prophet, his lips touched like Isaiah's by the live coal. Radnoti in the camp had been left no book but the Bible, as though to remind him of his Jewish heritage.

The early poetry is well described by the title of his first volume, *A Psalm Sicut* (1930). That salute embodies a joyous piety, which continued into his next volume, *Songs of Modern Shepherds* (1931). Radnoti in his early twenties has caught the spirit of a time very distant now, and rather touching in its absurdity:

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My lover is bathing nude in the water runs in locks down her back, ...
A proletarian joy, this, proletarian, shout ...

However, before long his radicalism took another form; it went down to the roots of common experience. As the hexameters of his Seventh Elegiac, from the labour camp, put it: "Here among rumours and weans will live, be they Frenchmen, Poles, loud-voiced Italian, partisan, Serb, cad Jew, in the mountains,

bodies huddled and in fever, yet one life that all two in common: waiting for good news, a womanly world, for a fate, free and human ...

Already in 1936, a year after marrying the Pauline whose image is central to the poems, Radnoti entitled his fifth book *Work on, Condemned!* Even his earliest raptures had been tinged with premonition. Death was an ever-present reality in his thought. Giving birth to him his mother had died under her husband's twin brother. For Radnoti living in the Hungary of Horvath was precarious. More than others he was aware of the coming horror. But his poetry continued to bring good news: he would find his way back to wife and home which somehow must survive the ruins; "a fate free and human" would not be withheld from future generations.

Emory George, sharing with Radnoti a city of birth and background in the widest sense, has given five years to rendering the complete poems into an American English that nearly always rises to the occasion. There are a few inequalities of tone, but aiming at "versions that have power and beauty as English poems" with the closest possible fidelity to form, he makes Radnoti a genuine presence. This says much for the energy and truth of Radnoti's own writing which takes command of an attentive translator. It also speaks for the translator's devotion, exemplified further in his introduction and careful notes.

Roman Poetry from the Republic to the Silver Age (1969). Southern Illinois University Press. \$9.95. 0 8093 0963 7) is a selection of translations by Dorothea Wender. It is divided into three sections: "Poets of the Roman Republic" (Caecilius, Lucilius, "Poets of the Augustan Age" (Virgil, Horace, Propertius, Tibullus, Ovid), and "Poets of the Silver Age" (Martial, Juvenal).

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